Artists' Cooperative Residency & Exhibitions

Carlos-Salazar Lermont: *Fixing the Baroque*
November 7, 2025 – January 4, 2026
Curated by Inés Arango-Guingue

The sacrifices of human migration from South to North are materially riddled and profuse. Whatever the varying degree of precarity or struggle under which this process is undertaken, no migrant can escape the loss of the life-affirming feeling of belonging that their host country will never give them. For the immigrant I used to be, it was a layer of intangible orgiastic surplus I felt was conspicuously absent from life in the United States. A surplus that is an all-consuming, unnamable sensation.

Carlos Salazar-Lermont's works in *Fixing the Baroque* are explicitly about the Venezuelan diaspora in the United States— he is himself part of this flux. The silver mylar emergency blankets and arepa flour packaging used for *Sanctuary's* video-in-altar configuration address the material riddles exerted upon migrating bodies and are symbolic of a culturally specific need for comfort and familiarity amid physical distress. The installation's undulating ornaments and use of gold leaf add an unmistakable Baroque turn, unexpected in the standard language of art dealing with migration. Yet if we consider no other country embodies Protestant ethos quite like the United States —money as life force, work ethics before aesthetics, and Anglo-Saxon common law that affirms eroticism is worse than gun violence— Baroque here is not only a marker of differentiation, but of defiance. It was, after all, visual propaganda meant to eradicate Protestantism via the depiction of bodily and earthly excess. It may even be at the root of the irreconcilable differences between Latinx and Gringo, the actual reason why we can only describe a Midwestern town as *boring.*

Indeed, the consequence of Baroque aesthetics for Latinos is perhaps lost to the American onlooker. This surplus I mentioned earlier— the sheer essence of life, the will to live, the *je ne sais quoi* we feel devoid of in the Northern hemisphere is bountiful in old Catholic churches. I go to them periodically to bask in the blackened images of the past and relish in the darkness that safeguards their inaccessible upper floors and nooks. I try to reach hypnosis with their tarnished gold ornaments, and conjure up images of the shapes I'll never see in a fresco that has faded after 400 years of humidity and heat. However unpleasant the sensation of institutional and liturgical irrelevance in those temples, their fleshy reverence to death feels like a faultless affirmation of my life.

More speculations can be drawn up as to what referencing counter-reformist art when dealing with the Venezuelan diaspora in the US can mean. Perhaps a drama-ridden art form like this one is ideal to represent how tragic migrating is. Perhaps it sprang out of a necessity to address it once Salazar-Lermont left Venezuela, and his previous body of work just happened to be already dealing with the persistence of religious values in Latin American society. All of these are true; yet what is remarkable is the intersections he establishes between one and the other via subtle but expressive gestures. His photo performance series of chiaroscuro self-portraits (*Habitus,* 2025) with a Petrine tonsure—the hair cut in the shape of a crown was a symbol worn by monks to express their vows to spirituality and their renunciation of

earthliness—sets up a parallel with the fact that being foreign can be a marker as socially defining and limiting as those invested unto medieval monks.

Esperando A Dios (EAD)—which translates to "waiting on god"— a video performance developed while Salazar-Lermont waited for his Employment Authorization Document (EAD) between 2022 and 2023, is stripped of Baroque glitz but presents God as interchangeable with his employment authorization. Filmed in Midwestern streets in front of minimum-wage employment ads, his performance of eerie resignation is akin to Catholicism's preaching on absolute surrender to God.

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